

Barker Brothers Building
800 West Seventh Street
Los Angeles
Los Angeles County
California

HABS No. CA-2156

HABS
CAL,
19-LOSAN,
54-

PHOTOGRAPHS

HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

BARKER BROTHERS BUILDING

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CA-2156

1. Location: 800 West Seventh Street, Los Angeles, Ca. 90017
2. Present Owner: Canal-Randolph Figueroa Inc.
3. Present Occupant: Barker Brothers, School of Interior design, Office suites.
4. Present Use: Mixed -- furniture store, school, offices
5. Significance: Barker Brothers is one of the oldest operating single family commercial enterprises in the City of Los Angeles. The firm was founded in 1890 and has since grown into a major retail outlet. The present structure was one of the largest furniture stores in America at the time it was first built. It was originally occupied exclusively by Barker Brothers. The building was the fourth location of the firm. Its construction symbolizes not only the growth of the company, but of Los Angeles itself.

The design of the original sales area was created specifically to provide the illusion of individual interior spaces as they would appear in the home. This unique and farsighted approach to sales is common in furniture stores today.

Barker Brothers was also involved in the building and architectural trade itself, offering advisory services including furnishing schemes, floor plans, decorative sketches, and color schemes.

Although the downtown retail business has declined, the building itself is a fully functional unit. This is largely a result of its prime location and the fact that the interior has been remodeled to satisfy the needs of today's corporate enterprise. Barker Brothers furniture store occupies four stories and a basement in the eleven to thirteen story structure.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: 1925 (City of Los Angeles, building permits)

2. Architect: Curlett and Beelman

Curlett and Beelman (1880-1942) - Alexander Curlett was born in San Francisco. He began to practice architecture in his father's office in that city (William Curlett), but moved to Los Angeles in 1913. He formed a partnership with Claud Beelman in 1921, and the firm carried on a successful practice in Los Angeles until 1932. The designs produced by the firm include the Roosevelt Building, Elks Temple, and the Union Oil Building.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners:

- 1921 Deed No. 975, recorded December 9, 1921, in Book 571, page 398
Mary C. Young to Mary Young Moore, an undivided one-half interest
- 1924 Leasehold interest dated October 1, 1924, recorded in Book 4238, page 32
Mary C. Young and Mary Young Moore to Sun Realty for 99 years
- 1924 Sublease interest dated October 30, 1924, in Book 4220, page 347
Sun Realty to Barker Brothers Inc.
- 1941 Decree No. 1251, recorded February 25, 1941, in Book 18197, page 261
Estate of Mary C. Young to Mary Young Moore an undivided one-half interest in the subject property
- 1973 Decree 3982 in probate case P- 577043, recorded May 2, 1973, Superior Court, County of Los Angeles
Estate of Mary Young Moore to the Archbishopric of New York
- 1973 Deed and Assignment of Lease No. 3666, recorded May 15, 1973
Archbishopric of New York to Canal-Randolph Figueroa Inc.

4. Builder: Scofield Engineering

5. Original Plans and Construction: Not located

6. Alterations and Additions: The exterior is unaltered. The interior has been altered to provide modern office space on those floors no longer used by Barker Brothers for retailing.

- B. Historical Context: William Barker, founder of Barker Brothers, was born in Indiana in 1864. He was the son of a merchant. After a brief period of training as a naval cadet, Mr. Barker resigned from the Academy and moved to California to join his family who had previously moved to Los Angeles.

In 1890 he organized the firm of Bailey and Barker. One year later, the name was changed to, and has since remained, Barker Brothers.

The firm still retails furniture throughout Southern California and is still controlled by the Barker family.

The development of Barker Brothers at the corner of Seventh and Figueroa was part of the general trend toward the western portion of the downtown in the 1920's. By 1930 it had been joined by the Roosevelt Building and a Global Marine across Seventh Street. Despite the expansion of downtown, Figueroa Street is still considered the western boundary of downtown and Seventh Street the southern boundary of the major retail and office area.

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural Character: Barker Brothers is built in a rectangular plan and is designed in a manner influenced by the Italian-Renaissance style. The building is however, principally a commercial/utilitarian structure with applied decoration. Major architectural features include a rusticated top floor and lower stories, several cornices, and a centrally located and arched main entrance on 7th Street. The exterior of the structure is virtually unaltered.
2. Condition of Fabric: Excellent

B. Exterior Description:

1. Over-all Dimensions: The building is located on a lot of .833 acres.
2. Foundations: The structure is built on reinforced concrete foundations.
3. Walls: The wall surfaces are flat with applied decoration, and are of reinforced brick construction. Structural details include metal fire escapes, decorative metal grillwork, and a rusticated lower four stories. The attic story is also rusticated, and there is a blind balustrade above the tenth floor.
4. Structural System/Framing: The building is of fireproof construction with a steel frame and reinforced concrete. Columns of the steel frame rest on reinforced concrete piers in the sub-basement.
5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: none
6. Chimneys: none
7. Openings:
 - a. Doorways and Doors: The main entrance consists of a large rusticated area with keystone and applied decoration. The doorway consists of an arched glass enclose. The door is flat and is of metal construction.
 - b. Windows and Shutters: The windows are of both flat and arched configuration. The most prominent window features are the decorative showcase windows at street level. These windows are of plate glass with

decorative metal and marble surrounds. Paired and arched windows band the upper story of the structure. There is also a band of arched windows at the third story level. The majority of windows are small pane, and are of either sash or pivot construction.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, Covering: The roof is flat in configuration, and is of composite construction.
- b. Cornice Eaves: The building has simple dentil cornices above the mezzanine, third, and eleventh story levels. A bracketted, decorative cornice is located at the roofline.
- c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: none

C. Description of the Interior: Since this submission refers only to exterior recordation of the structure, only a brief description of interior details is included.

The interior has been entirely remodeled. Barker Brothers originally occupied the entire building. They now occupy only the lower four floors of it. The rest of the interior of the structure has been remodeled to provide office space for tenants.

D. Site:

- 1. General Setting and Orientation: Barker Brothers is oriented on an east to west cross axial plan. It is bounded on the west by Figueroa Street, on the north by Seventh Street, and on the East by Flower Street. It is entered from the north on Seventh Street. The structure is located in a densely built urban environment, and is related to several structures of compatible design and/or scale.
- 2. Historic Landscape Design: none
- 3. Outbuildings: none

S. FIGUEROA,

62

S. FLOWER

340

343

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Bibliography

1. Primary and unpublished sources:

City of Los Angeles, Department of Building
and Safety, building permits

City of Los Angeles, Department of Planning,
Land Use Planning and Management System

County of Los Angeles, Recorder's Office,
Official Records of the County of Los Angeles

2. Secondary Sources:

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Sanborn Map Company, Los Angeles Fire Insurance Maps
(New York: 1883, 1927, 1958).

Southwest Builder and Contractor, March 14, 1924, p.38.

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pp. 44-45

Works Projects Administration, Los Angeles Drawings
(Los Angeles, 1939).

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Los Angeles Downtown
People Mover Authority
October, 1980

PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

The Los Angeles Downtown People Mover Project, supported by a demonstration grant from the Urban Mass Transportation Administration, is proposing to build an automated, grade-separated transit system in downtown Los Angeles.

A portion of the route as proposed would run down Figueroa Street in a median, approximately 40 feet from the Figueroa facade of Barker Brothers. In addition, a station is proposed in the middle of Figueroa Street just south of the intersection of Figueroa and Seventh Streets. Neither the guideway or the station will require a physical alteration of Barker Brothers. However, they will introduce a new visual element and obscure a portion of the Figueroa Street facade as viewed from across the street. The main entrance to Barker Brothers is on Seventh Street.